



Communication from Train Horns Steering Group

The cross industry Train Horns Steering Group met on 6 March 2006 and considered what has been done to date, the emerging findings, and what we are going to do in the immediate future. It agreed to issue this communication.

1. What we have done since first steering group

- Met Noise Abatement Society and Broadband horn promoters (18Jan)
- Met with all party group of MPs (30 Jan)
- Met HSE (27 Feb)
- Compiled a cross Industry database from 27 companies (Train Operators, Network Rail and RSSB) on complaints
- Network Rail have temporarily suspended introduction of virtually all new whistle boards while the review is conducted
- Network Rail has been able to either remove or relocate whistle boards in the following areas. Further whistle boards are also now under review.
 - Rooksdown, Isington, Hampshire
 - Woodgrange Close, Essex
 - Shutters, Haslemere, Forge, Etchingham
 - Tonford, Canterbury,
 - Brookend, Birchington
 - Liss Forest, Hampshire.
- Network Rail have met or are due to meet a number of MPs to consider local problems
 - 27 January - Andy Reed, Loughborough
 - 3 March – Derek Wyatt – Sittingbourne & Sheppey
 - 10 March – Angela Smith – Basildon
 - 24 March – Bernard Jenkin – Essex North
 - TBC – Julian Brazier - Canterbury
- Southern Railway have met local residents in Arun Valley
- As part of evaluation of the safety risk RSSB has identified what information is available about incidents on footpath crossings and led a structured hazard identification meeting with both users and rail industry relating to whistle boards for footpath crossings
- Established projects to address all items identified in first communication
 - Nature of the problem
 - Reconsider risk approach
 - Valuing noise nuisance
 - Technological alternatives
- Met on 6th March to review progress, actions and way forward

2. What we have found to date

- We cannot responsibly make immediate changes to the rules, volumes or times for sounding train horns and have to do more work, in conjunction with the safety regulator, to establish if there are any feasible changes to rules and volumes.
- 35 locations have generated more than one complaint and represent over half of all complaints received by the rail industry in the 6 months to Dec 2005.
- Most, but not all, of the locations with more than one complaint are within the London and South East area.
- Broadband Horn Technology may be worth further consideration and the potential is currently being evaluated. A campaign change to implement this technology could cost several million pounds.
- Train Horns provide a tangible safety benefit for users of footpath crossings. Preliminary results from risk analysis of industry data relating to footpath crossings, with and without miniature warning lights – from Jan 1998 to Sep 2005 are as follows
 - In the 7.75 year data period there have been 25 accidental fatalities, 10 major injuries, 29 minor injuries and 417 near miss incidents reported. This gives an average of 3.37 accidental fatalities and weighted injuries per year.
 - Fatalities contribute the majority of the risk, 95%, at footpath and open crossings. Twenty-one fatalities (84%) occurred during hours of daylight and four fatalities (16%) occurred during hours of darkness. Three fatalities (12%) have occurred during the hours being considered for a night time ban ie between the hours of 2330 and 0700 hrs
- HSE is :
 - joining the Steering Group
 - engaging in work to review the risks
 - considering future of 'Principles and Guidance'
 - prepared to consider any risk based evidence in its consideration of future of Principles and Guidance relating to level crossings
- There is no readily available data to enable industry to value the noise nuisance so we need to generate it.
- RSSB is consulting on some good housekeeping changes to the current standard (to establish a maximum level and to have a reduced level to the side for all new horns/trains) <http://www.rssb.co.uk/rgspass2.asp>

3. What we are now going to do

- Risk Considering and developing risk assessment tools for footpath crossings, using observational data and local information which could lead to:
 - limiting hours for mandatory sounding of horns
 - more sophisticated risk analysis tool for footpath crossings/whistle boards
 - understanding the potential impact of quieter horns
- Case for change - give priority to work to estimate value (cost to neighbours) of noise nuisance
- Technology - Broadband horns (preliminary review)
 - consideration of options for reducing noise to the side on identified problem trains
 - responding to NAS on initial view on potential Broadband in March
- Rules - consulting on introduction of a maximum noise level for new horns, and a lower noise level to the side
- Local Issues - Network Rail and local TOCs are exploring in detail the top 10 locations (by number of complaints)
- Industry handling - Steering Group continues as the focus for review and industry action
 - Briefing MPs 15 March
 - Steering Group in early May
 - focus immediate efforts on local issues
 - further cross industry collation of public complaints to monitor any changes over time
- Timescales :
 - Broadband Horns – recommendation on whether to go forward with feasibility assessment – end of March 2006
 - Risk Analysis – likely to deliver results in September 2006
 - Value of Noise – targeted to produce preliminary values in July 2006

The cross industry Steering Group consists of representatives from: Rail Safety and Standards Board, Network Rail, Passenger Train Operators, ATOC, Freight Train operators, HSE, and is supported by RSSB's technical and risk expertise. If you want to communicate directly with the steering group you can do so through the Chairman, Anson Jack, who is director, standards at the Rail Safety and Standards Board – e-mail anson.jack@rssb.co.uk